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Exegetical Notes.

JOHN, CHAPTER I.

1. **The Logos.**—(a) *Use of the term.*—It occurs, without any modifier, only in the prologue of the fourth gospel, three times in vs. 1 and once in vs. 14. It occurs once in Rev. 19:13, in the phrase, “The Word of God,” which appears as one name of the rider on the white horse. This is manifestly akin to its use in the fourth gospel, for it designates the Son of God, and the Apocalypse, like the prologue of John, affirms that he was in the beginning (Rev. 1:17) and that the world was made by him (Rev. 3:14). There is but one other passage in which the term seems to be used in the Johannean sense, and that is 1 John 1:1. Thus the term *Logos* as connected with the Son of God is found only in the Johannean writings, and here in but three, or at the most four, places.

(b) *Meaning of the term.*—What the author of the fourth gospel meant by *Logos* appears, first, from the prologue. The *Logos*, he says, became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (vs. 14), *i. e.*, the *Logos* became Jesus the Messiah (vs. 17). The only-begotten Son, to whom the Baptist bore witness and whose glory the evangelist had beheld (vss. 14, 15), was the *Logos* in a visible and tangible form. Yet it does not follow that *Logos* was for the evangelist an exact synonym of *Christ*. He limits its use to the period before the birth of Jesus. When the *Logos* became flesh, he was no longer called *Logos*. In other words, that manifestation of God which in one stage is called *Logos* in another stage is called *Christ*. It is not, however, the same in both stages. The Word *became* flesh (ἐγένετο), that is, it became something which it was not before. The *Logos* was not Christ, but was manifest in him.

Again, it is plain that the writer of the fourth gospel thought of Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the *Logos*, because he thought that Jesus Christ was the supreme revelation of God. Before Jesus came, that supreme revelation was the *Logos*. The *Logos* become flesh was full of grace and truth (vs. 14), as the *Logos* before becoming flesh was a life-giving light to men (vss. 4, 5). The only-begotten Son, who

was the visible manifestation of the hitherto invisible *Logos*, stood higher than Moses, for grace and truth in their final form came through him (vs. 17). He declared the Father (vs. 18). Hence it is evident that the author used the term *Logos* to denote the personal revealer of God. And this meaning of the term is confirmed, in the second place, from the gospel as a whole. For this lays great stress on the claim that Jesus had a unique union with the Father, and, based upon that union, a unique knowledge (*e.g.*, 10:30; 5:19, 20; 8:28, 29), corresponding to the knowledge of the pre-incarnate *Logos*. The author represents the work of Jesus as a work of interpreting the Father (1:18), and, according to the words attributed to Jesus himself, his great mission was that of teacher. He sums up his work as a manifestation of the *name* of the Father (17:6).

In view of these considerations there can be no doubt in regard to the meaning which the fourth gospel attached to *Logos*, or why it regarded the *Logos* as incarnate in Jesus Christ.

The differences between this *Logos* conception and that of Philo are many and deep. The name is the same, but the content is wholly unlike. Thus the *Logos* of Philo is not associated with redemption, is not clearly personal, and does not become incarnate. Its roots are in Greek philosophy, and not in the Hebrew religion.¹

(c) *Origin of the term.*—Both the term and its content can be explained, I think, as purely Jewish products. Whether, as a matter of fact, the term *is* to be explained in this manner is not so certain. Luthardt* quotes Carpzov as follows: "John would have written just so, even if no Plato or Philo had ever treated of the *Logos*." This seems too much to affirm. We may hold that he *could* have written as he did without knowledge of Greek or Alexandrian philosophy, but we can scarcely affirm that he *would* have so written. It is very natural to suppose that his use of the term was suggested by its current use in Greek philosophy.³ He might have coined it on the basis of such Old Testament passages as the account of the creation (Gen., chap. 1), the praise of wisdom (Prov., chap. 8), and the references to the angel of the Lord (*e.g.*, Gen. 24:40), together with the rabbinic conception of the *Memra* of Jehovah,⁴ but at the same time it is difficult to suppose

¹ For a full discussion of Philo's doctrine the reader may consult *Philo Judæus*, by JAMES DRUMMOND, 2 vols., 1888.

² *Commentary on John*, Engl. trans., Vol. I, p. 262.

³ Compare HARNACK, *Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. I, p. 85; O. HOLTZMANN, *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 82; MARCUS DODS, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*.

⁴ See WEBER, *Die Lehren des Talmuds*, pp. 175-9.

that he was unacquainted with its use in the Hellenic world in which he lived. It seems most natural to me to hold that John's *use* of the term was suggested by Greek philosophy, while holding at the same time that the content of the word is Jewish.

(d) *Relation of the term to the teaching of Jesus.*—The *Logos* doctrine of John, while having some root in the teaching of Jesus, is quite widely different from that teaching. This point, though very important, can be treated here only in the briefest way.

Jesus referred on three occasions to some sort of preëxistence, and these passages have been held to justify John's declaration that the *Logos* was "in the beginning." Again, Jesus represents himself as the perfect manifestation of the will of the Father, the one who has life in himself, who has unique knowledge of the Father, who has unique authority to give life and to judge, the one who is the light of the world. These words furnish a certain basis for the statements of the prologue that the *Logos* was with God, that there was light in him which was the life of men, and that he lights every man. Indirectly they also afford a ground for the statement that all things were made by the *Logos*, for if in the earthly life of Jesus he was the perfect medium through whom the thought and power of God were expressed, it might be inferred that the pre-incarnate *Logos* had been such a medium from the beginning. But while we may thus trace a connection between the prologue and the teaching of Jesus in the fourth gospel, it must yet be affirmed that the *Logos* doctrine which it contains belongs to the evangelist rather than to Jesus. Thus the eternal preëxistence of the personal *Logos* is a settled dogma in the prologue, but it is quite uncertain whether any words of Jesus assert personal preëxistence at all. Once more, the prologue affirms as unquestionable that all things were made by the *Logos*, but there is only an indirect basis for this in the teaching of Jesus. Again, the prologue seems to affirm that the *Logos* was of the very essence of God, but the language of Jesus regarding his relation to God is never metaphysical. Therefore we must hold that this dogmatic and speculative doctrine of the prologue is quite unlike those utterances of Jesus whose subject-matter is most nearly akin to it.

2. **Chapter 1:4.**—"He came to his own things." These words mark the Jewish people as the peculiar possession of the *Logos*. Coming to them was, as it were, coming *home*. Compare 19:27, in Greek. This language implies that the *Logos* sustained a peculiar relation to the Jewish people prior to his incarnation. John doubtless inferred such a relation from the special revelations mentioned in the Old Testament.

The coming of which this verse speaks is the historical coming of the *Logos* in Jesus Christ. This is required both by the preceding verse, which manifestly concludes the thought of the relation of the *Logos* to the world, and also by the following verse in which they who receive him are described as they who believed on his *name*. But this expression, in the fourth gospel, means believing in the Messianic character of Jesus, and therefore cannot refer to the pre-existent *Logos*.

3. **Chapter 1:14.**—It is not the chief purpose of this verse to tell us *that* the *Logos* came (we have that in vs. 11), but to say *how* he came. The invisible Word came in a visible and intelligible form, for he came as a brother-man. The word σάρξ, “flesh,” covers the entire man (*cf.* 11:33; 12:27; 1 John 5:6). The clause does not teach that the *Logos* took a body (so F. C. Baur). That idea would require σῶμα rather than σάρξ, and the verb ἐγένετο does not mean “to assume” or “take.”

4. **Chapter 1:18.**—The reading of Westcott and Hort is μονογενὴς θεός, “an only-begotten God.” This has the support of the MSS. Aleph and B, and has against it the MS. A, most of the MSS. after the fourth century, from widely separated regions, and the testimony of nearly all the Fathers, both Greek and Latin, who all read υἱός, “son.”⁵ The internal evidence also is against the reading θεός: (1) Jesus is three times called *only-begotten Son* (John 3:16–18; 1 John 4:9), but never, unless here, *only-begotten God*. (2) The argument of the context is against θεός. It is said that no one—that is, of course, no man—has ever seen God. The contrast which we expect is that the man Jesus, in distinction from all others, has seen him (*cf.* 5:19). But the verse involves a flat contradiction if we read θεός, for it begins with the statement that no one has ever seen God, and ends with the declaration that an *only-begotten God*, meaning Jesus Christ, has made him known; but men had seen Jesus Christ, and therefore, if we read θεός, had seen God, which has just been denied. Therefore the contradiction is apparent. (3) It must also be held unfavorable to the reading θεός that this verse would then teach that Christ interpreted the Father because he was of the same *substance* with him, while in the addresses of Jesus in the fourth gospel his revelation of the Father is conditioned upon his *ethical* likeness to God (*e. g.*, 5:20; 8:29), and never upon a metaphysical relationship.

5. **Chapter 1:29.**—“Behold the lamb of God who beareth (away)

⁵ See EZRA ABBOT, *Critical Essays*, p. 241.

the sin of the world." The words *ὁ ἁμώης* point to some well-known lamb, but which? The paschal lamb is prominent in the Old Testament, and elsewhere Jesus is regarded as the antitype of this (John 19 : 36 ; 1 Cor. 5 : 7), but the paschal lamb was not an offering for sin, and therefore cannot easily be thought of here.

The lamb of the daily morning and evening worship was, in like manner, not a sin-offering,⁶ and so does not afford the proper starting-point for an explanation of the passage under discussion.

We, therefore, take the passage as based on Isaiah, chap. 53, which was early regarded as Messianic (Acts 8 : 32-33 ; 1 Pet. 2 : 21-25). In Isaiah the unresisting servant of Jehovah is likened to a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and he bears the sins of many.

It is difficult, however, to believe that John the Baptist spoke thus of the death of Jesus. According to the synoptists, he thought that the Messiah would at once separate the wheat from the chaff and set up his kingdom (Matt. 3 : 12 ; Luke 3 : 17). Hence there was no place in his thought for the death of the Messiah. And how should this *Jewish* reformer, in pointing out Jesus to his disciples, speak of him in relation to the *world*, rather than to the Jewish people? We know that the disciples of Jesus could not at all associate the thought of death with their Messiah. How, then, can we suppose that the Baptist, in whose school Jesus found his earliest followers, could have believed that the great work of the Messiah was to be accomplished by death? The difficulty is not simply that he should have thought of the Messiah as a sufferer, but that he should have put the Messiah's death in the forefront of his services for mankind. And, finally, how can we attribute to the forerunner of Jesus a thought on the relation of his death to the sin of the world which we do not find anywhere in the words of Jesus himself? We seem to be required, therefore, to attribute the teaching of this verse to the evangelist rather than to John the Baptist.

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⁶See SCHULTZ, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, pp. 543, 544.